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ABSTRACT

The Llano Grande Research Project in south Texas directs research methods and special projects classes that assist students in developing effective academic, research, and social skills. Students in these classes pursue a curriculum based on pedagogy of place principles and gain an understanding of their community's environment and culture. This document outlines principles, objectives, and activities of the place-based curriculum. The principles focus on experiencing the local environment, history, and economy; spirituality; and community participation and politics. Almost all of the local students are of Mexican descent, and Llano Grande addresses the lack of culturally relevant textbook materials through student oral history projects. Course objectives are presented for two half-credit courses in social studies: special projects and research methods. Objectives cover academic skills in reading, writing, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, computer skills, and research; fund raising; conducting community meetings; seeking and using information; written and oral communication; and problem solving. Elementary and secondary activities are described that encompass interviewing family and community members, journal writing, art and performance activities, journalism, environmental study, and uses of mathematics in the real world. (SV)

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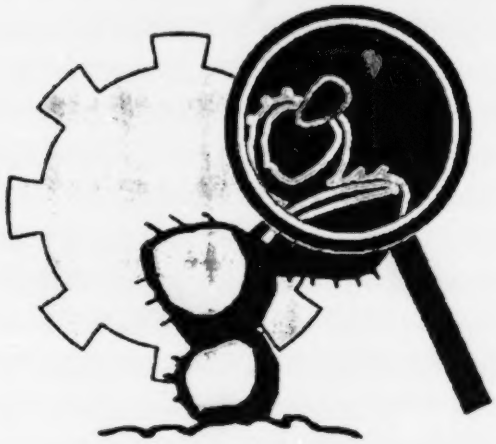
Curriculum Guide
Based on Pedagogy of Place Principles



LLANO GRANDE CENTER FOR RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

Prepared by students and staff of the

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Introduction

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Research Methods and the Special Topics classes directed by the Llano Grande Research Project are to assist students in developing effective academic, research, interpersonal, and social skills. Students in these classes will also pursue a curriculum based on pedagogy of place principles. Students will gain an understanding (and hopefully an appreciation) for the environment, the economy, the history, and the culture in which they live.

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills are at the core of our curricula, and we have incorporated a set of principles based on teaching place. In addition, our teachers and students have developed a series of activities ranging from K-12 which can be used in numerous classes and situations; these can be found later in this document.

Principles

The Essence of Place:
Experiencing the **Environment**

Students become aware of the importance of taking care of their surroundings. This awareness fosters a greater concern for continuing world preservation.

The Essence of Yesterday:
Experiencing **History**

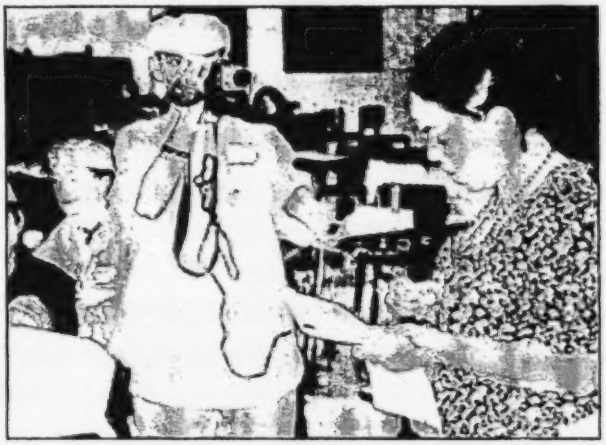
Students become aware of their heritage. Knowing their history lays the foundation for further, more meaningful learning.

The Essence of Worth:
Experiencing the **Economy**

Students become aware of their role as responsible citizens who can participate in the community's economy.

The Essence of Unity:
Experiencing **Spirituality**

Students become aware of their personal life experiences dealing with the emotional and spiritual self in individual and collective ways.



Edcouch-Elsa student Orlando Castillo documents a student reading her poem at a community meeting..

The Essence of Community Participation:
Experiencing **Politics**

Students become aware of the need to actively participate in the decision-making process of their community.

On traditional history and literature

A concern we face in our social studies and language arts courses are the way history and literature have been traditionally taught. Ninety-nine percent of Edcouch-Elsa students are of Mexican ancestry, yet our textbooks treat people of Mexican origin only peripherally.

To address that concern, the Llano Grande Research Project has begun to retrieve elements of our past and has encouraged locals to create their own literature. We have done this through an extensive oral history project where students and teachers together develop questionnaires, interviews, and narratives.

Edcouch-Elsa High School students engage in an oral history with a local resident.

The results have thus been positive. Members of our community have been eager to share their voices and experiences and in the process have become historians. Just as our students have become ethnographers, writers, and active agents for curricular and cultural transformation in our schools and community.

These processes can be seen in the *Llano Grande Journal*, a journal that has become the forum through which our students and members of the community express themselves.

On our Democratic Approach

While our focus last year was on oral histories, this year we will begin training our students on how to best spread the practices of teaching place. To that end, the Research Methods and Special Topics classes will concentrate on teaching students how to train others on how to pursue pedagogy of place instruction. But perhaps more significantly, our students will become important resources for other students, faculty, administrators, and the community.

Cover page of the Llano Grande Journal, *Vol. 1, no. 2.*

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Course Objective

To develop a wide range of skills directed at teaching students to be effective problem solvers.

113.38 Special Topics in Social Studies (One Half Credit)

Academic Skills

Reading:

Reading different genres of local literature, local history, local issues in economics, government, etc.

Writing:

Oral histories, correspondence with school and community people, grant proposal development.

Critical thinking:

Addressing problem solving in the schools and in the community will force students to use critical thinking skills.

Interpersonal skills

Are developed through meetings, interviews, conversations, and even negotiations with a wide range of people.

Computer

Students in this course will learn a wide range of computer skills, from basic word processing to graphic design and publishing.

Research

Secondary research by reading books, primary research – interviewing primary sources, collecting data from people, city records, county records, state records, university archives [Publishing Process]

Orlando Castillo, Krystal Cura, and Yzenia Pena at an Austin workshop on PageMaker.

Fundraising

Learn process of writing, identifying, submitting and developing a proposal by understanding how to develop needs assessment, a cogent narrative, and how to respond directly to questions in the Request for Proposal (RFP). Through this process our students have been successful in winning $375,000 in grant money from the Kellogg Foundation, and we are currently competing for more funding which will come directly into our schools and communities.

Community development

Developing frame works where community conversations happen – how to plan a meeting – how to create an agenda – how to run a meeting – how to document a meeting-how to conduct a debriefing. We'll do all this through the use of Participatory Models.

(a) General requirements. Students shall be awarded one-half unit of credit for successful completion of this course. Students may take this course with different core content for a maximum of two credits.

(b) Introduction. In Special Topics in Social Studies, an elective course comparable to the former Advanced Social Science Problems, students are provided the opportunity to apply the knowledge and skills of the **social** sciences to a variety of topics and issues.

Students look on as Superintendent Mary Alice Reyes speaks at a community meeting.

Students use critical-thinking skills to locate, organize, analyze, and use data collected from a variety of sources. Problem solving and decision making are important elements of the course as is the communication of information in written, oral, and visual forms.

(c) ***Knowledge and skills.***

(1) **Social studies skills.** The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology.

The student is expected to:

(a) differentiate between, locate, and use primary and secondary sources such as computer software, database, media and news services, biographies, interviews, and artifacts to acquire information about a selected topic in social studies;

(b) analyze information by sequencing, categorizing, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, comparing, contrasting, finding the main idea, summarizing, making generalizations and predictions, and drawing inferences and conclusions;

(c) identify points of view from the historic context surrounding an event and the frame of reference that influenced the participants;

(d) support a point of view on a social studies issue or event;

(e) identify bias in written, oral , and visual material;

(f) evaluate the validity of a source based on language, corroboration with other sources, and information about the author; and

(g) use appropriate mathematical skills to interpret social studies information such as maps and graphs.

(2) **Social studies skills.** The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms.

Ray Garcia from La Villa High School shows a different form of expressing social commentary.

The student is expected to:

(a) use social studies terminology correctly;

(b) use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation;

(c) transfer information from one medium to another, including written to visual, and statistical to written or visual, using computer software as appropriate; and

(d) create written, oral, and visual presentations of social studies information.

(3) **Social studies skills.** The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings.

The student is expected to:

(a) use a problem – solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution; and

(b) use a decision making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision.

Edcouch-Elsa students solve a problem creatively during community workshop.

113.39. Social Studies Research Methods (One-Half Credit)

(a) General requirements. Students shall be awarded one-half unit of credit for successful completion of this course. Students may take this course with different course content for a maximum of two credits.

(b) Introduction. In Social Studies Research Methods, an elective course, students conduct advanced research on a selected topic in social studies using quantitative methods of inquiry. The course is designed to be conducted in either classroom or independent settings.

Knowledge and skills.

(1) **Social studies skills.** The student understands the basic philosophical foundation for qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry.

The student is expected to:

(a) develop and use criteria for the evaluation of qualitative and quantitative information;

(b) generate logical and consistent conclusions from given qualitative and quantitative information; and

(c) design a research project with a rationale for a given research method.

(2) **Social studies skills.** The student understands the need for an organizing framework to identify a problem or area of interest and collect information.

The student is expected to:

(a) select an issue, problem, or area of interest; write a rationale and preliminary ideas for research methods; and develop a bibliography; and

(b) apply a process approach to a research problem.

(3) **Social studies skills.** The student understands the fundamental principles and requirements of validity and reliability (both social science and historical fields of inquiry).

The student is expected to:

(a) define and differentiate reliability and validity;

(b) identify methods of checking for reliability; and

(c) evaluate various sources for reliability and validity and justify the conclusions.

(4) **Social studies skills.** The student understands how data can be collected from a variety of sources using a variety of methods.

The student is expected to:

(a) collect information from a variety of sources (primary, secondary, written, and oral) using techniques such as questionnaires, interviews and library research; and

(b) use various technology such as CD-ROM, library topic catalogues, networks, and online information systems to collect information about selected topics.

(5) **Social studies skills.** The student understands the use of theory and research for descriptive and predictive purposes.

The student is expected to:

(a) describe the results of a research process; and

(b) make predictions as to future actions and/or outcomes based on conclusions of research.

(6) **Social studies skills.** The student understands the principles and requirements of the scientific method.

The student is expected to:

(a) apply the scientific method in a research project;

(b) create a matrix, relating various research methodologies such as survey research, ethnography, primary documents, and statistical analysis to given subject areas; and

(c) determine the most efficient research approach from a variety of alternatives using a cost-benefit analysis.

(7) **Social studies skills.** The student understands basic statistical approaches to the analysis of aggregate information.

The student is expected to:

(a) define and compute statistical information using various statistical approaches such as means testing and correlation, measures of central tendency and distribution, the devel-

opment of categorical systems, and logical analysis; and

(b) analyze information using a spreadsheet or statistical analysis information software.

(8) Social studies skills. The student understands the requirements of graphic displays of data.

The student is expected to:

(a) construct visuals such as charts, graphs, tables, time lines, and maps to convey appropriate data; and

(b) create a presentation on a selected topic using word-processing, graphics, and multimedia software.

(9) Social studies skills. The student understands the basic principles of historical analysis.

The student is expected to:

(a) differentiate between primary and secondary sources and describe the best uses for each;

(b) construct and test cause-and-effect hypotheses and compare them with correlational analyses; and

(c) select the appropriate use of chronological relationships in historiography.

(10) Social studies skills. The student understands the ethical aspects of collecting, storing, and using data.

The student is expected to:

(a) describe breaches of ethical standards for handling human experimental or survey information in a given scenario; and

(b) evaluate the relationship among copyright laws, proper citation requirements, and ethical ways of collecting and presenting information.

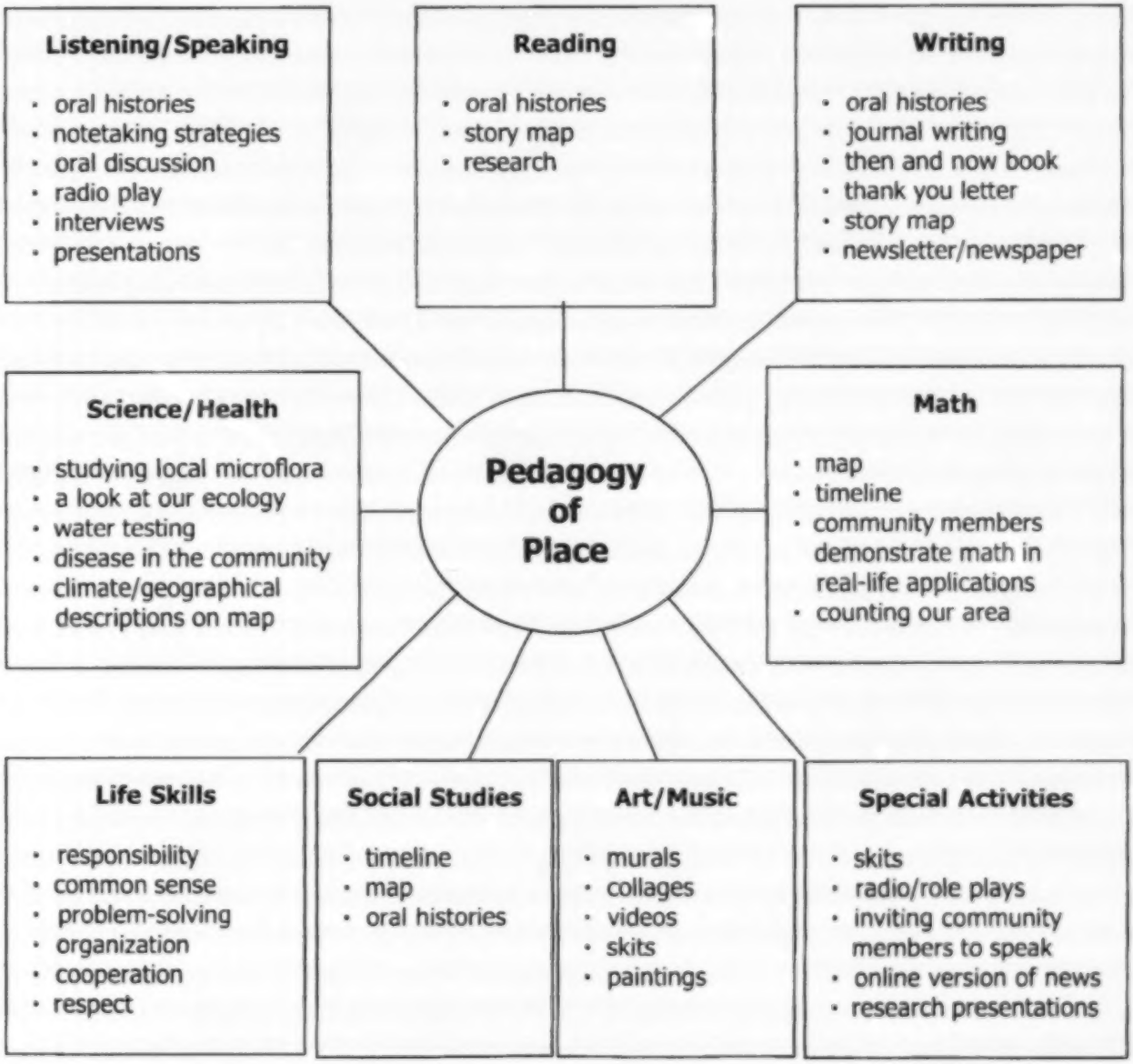
Students at LBJ School in Elsa interview local World War II veterans, a prime example of studying primary sources.

Scope of Pedagogy of Place Studies
Llano Grande Research Project

Grade: **Pre K-12**
Six Weeks: **all**

THEME: ***Pedagogy of Place***

Unit Generalization: As students study themselves and their community, they make positive connections to this place they call home.



Pedagogy of Place—A Plan for Exploration

I. Elementary Plan

Then and Now Book (*ongoing*)

Students will take a questionnaire home that the parents and/or grandparents will complete. The questions can focus on a specific topic (e.g. the first day of school, Christmas, Easter, etc.). Students will compose one paragraph based on the information from the questionnaire and then write another paragraph about their own experience. This activity can be continued throughout the year so that the paragraphs can be compiled into a book for an Author's Fair.

Journal

Using a similar questionnaire as a basis, students will adopt a character's point of view and write about a day in the life of the character.

Fourth grade Edcouch-Elsa student writes in her journal.

Timeline (*ongoing*)

Students will display various events that were gathered from their interviews on a timeline in the sequence that they occurred in the story.

Story Map

Students will summarize one of the oral histories from the Llano Grande database. A typical story map has the following elements:

Characters **Setting**

Pictures

Problem **Solution**

However, teachers can select different elements, depending on the story. In addition, the "Pictures" section can include poems, drawings, paintings, or even songs that illustrate certain aspects of the story.

Interview

Using student-written questions, students will interview an elderly community member and compose an oral history based on the stories and facts gathered from the interview.

Puppet Show/Skit

Students will perform a show based on local history. They can use an interview they conducted or an oral history from the Llano Grande database as a resource. The show can be performed in class, at a parent-teacher meeting, etc.

Edcouch-Elsa High School student recreates the life of an oral history interviewee.

Mural/Collage

Students will bring the interviews and oral histories to life through art, creating visual representations of various aspects and events found in the stories.

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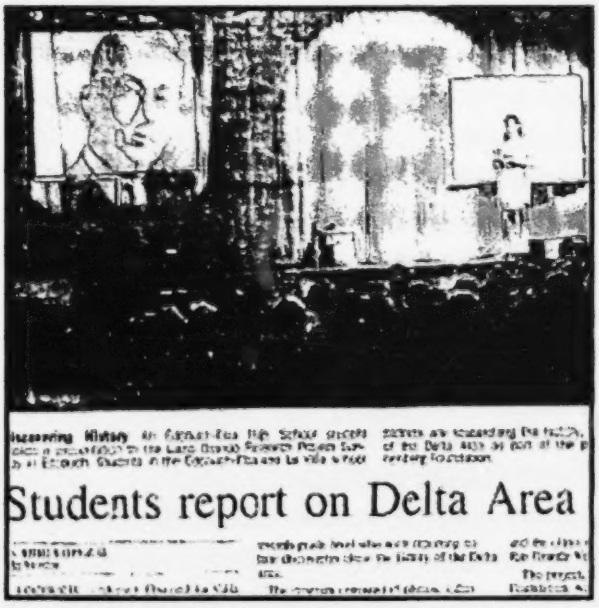
Map

Students will create a map that represents a selected route in their community (e.g. from home to school, etc.). Other routes that can be mapped and explored are particular routes that each student's family has traveled. For example, students could map their families' journey from Mexico to the Delta Area, from the Delta Area to Michigan, from the Delta Area to a vacation destination, etc. In addition, students can examine the geographical aspects, such as climate and vegetation, of each route.

Newsletter/Newspaper

Teachers will send out a letter at the beginning of the project to encourage parental involvement. Students will be assigned parts of the newsletter to write based on the unit they are studying. Some examples of the sections include the following: front page, classifieds, local heroes (e.g. firefighters, police, veterans, high school students, people who serve the community), book reviews, pictures, poetry (bilingual), stories, word search, and cartoons.


Students report on Delta Area

Edcouch-Elsa High School student presents her oral history findings in a public forum.

Radio Play

Students can role-play disc jockeys, newscasters, or talk show hosts, covering certain aspects of an oral history. These plays can be acted out over the intercom system, at a parent-teacher meeting, etc.

Studying Our Surroundings

In teams, students will identify and describe all the plant and animal life in an area designated by the teacher, perhaps one half of a city block near the school. Students will make careful observations of each item and discuss the importance of each to the area. Students will also consider the impact of the loss of one or more of the living organisms on the area. This research can be presented in a variety of formats: charts, tables, video, collages, or reports. In addition, this information can serve as a basis for class discussions, further research, and written summaries.

Counting Our Area

Students will practice basic arithmetic by counting items in their community. Teachers will select certain items from the area for counting and comparison (e.g. how many churches, how many stores, etc.). These exercises can be the basis for the construction of charts and counting games using the layout of the local area.

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II. Secondary Plan

Comparing the Past and Present (*ongoing*)

Students will retrieve information about their parents'/grandparents' past and life experiences using different mediums: student-written questionnaires, oral interviews, or writing samples of the interviewee. The questions can focus on a specific topic (e.g. the first day of school, Christmas, Easter, etc.). Students will compose one paragraph using the information gathered and then write another paragraph about their own experience. This activity can be continued throughout the year so that the paragraphs can be compiled into a book for display, published as a classroom journal, or published in the *Llano Grande Journal*.

Journal

Using a similar research method as a basis, students will adopt a character's point of view and write about a day in the life of that character. Students will be encouraged to interview people outside their family, perhaps a neighbor, distant relative, etc.

Story Map

Students will outline one of the interviews from the Llano Grande database or one of the interviews they have conducted using a story map. A typical story map has the following elements (subject to change according to teacher's discretion):

Characters **Setting**

Pictures

Problem **Solution**

Local laborer working the fields.

The "Pictures" section can include drawings, computer graphics, magazine cutouts, or poems. Students can even use PowerPoint software to create and present their story maps. In addition, the story map can serve as a basis for a written summary and class discussion.

Timeline (*ongoing*)

Students will display various events that were gathered from their interviews on a timeline in the sequence that they occurred in the story. The timeline can be collective or individual and will be constructed so as to allow for mobility and flexibility.

Thank You Letter

Students will write a thank you letter to the person(s) they interviewed using the components of an informal letter.

Newsletter/Newspaper

Teachers can send out a letter at the beginning of the project to encourage parental involvement. Students will be assigned different parts of the newsletter to write. Some examples of the sections include the following: front page, classifieds, local heroes (e.g. firefighters, police, veterans, high school students, people who serve the community), book reviews, pictures, poetry (bilingual), stories, word search, and cartoons. Each newsletter will focus on a different local theme. An online version of the newsletter can be developed in addition to the paper version.

Puppet Show/Skit

Students will perform a show based on local themes. The show can be performed in class, at a parent-teacher meeting, etc. Students will be encouraged to use different forms of media, including music, videos, computer graphics, PowerPoint, or other technological equipment.

Mural/Collage

Students will bring the interviews and oral histories to life through art, creating visual representations of various aspects and events found in the stories. Students will be encouraged to use various forms of media, including music, videos, computer graphics, PowerPoint, or other technological equipment. These representations can be displayed at various places around the community.

Students perform in Delia Perez's class-sponsored Cultural Arts Festival.

Map

Students will create a map that traces the migration and immigration patterns, past and present, of their families. Students can focus on the geographical features of the various areas traveled by their families. Students will again be encouraged to use a multimedia format. These maps can serve as a springboard for discussion.

Role Play

Students can role-play disc jockeys, newscasters, or talk show hosts, commenting on scenes or events from the oral histories. These plays can be acted out over the intercom system or filmed and shown over the school's television monitors.

Research Project

Students will select a topic on which to do in-depth research. They will utilize interviews and other secondary material as sources. The culmination of each student's research will not be limited to the standard research paper. Students will be encouraged to use a multimedia format, including music, film, and/or other visual aids, to present their findings and conclusions to the class or community. In addition, these papers and presentations can serve as a springboard for class discussions and further research.

Interview

Students will interview an elderly community member using student-written questions and compose an oral history based on the stories and facts gathered from the interview. These histories can be compiled into a book with illustrations and graphics.

Student transcribes an oral history.

Sample Research Topics

Where Does Our Money Go?

As part of an extended research project on the decline of the Delta Area's economy or as an isolated activity, students will calculate the percentage of their family's income that leaves the area. Using student results, the class will compile aggregate data using graphs and charts. This data can be used to prompt classroom discussion on the changes of the area's economy.

Grant Research and Writing for Community Development

Using the Internet as a research tool, students will find available monies to meet the community's needs. In grant writing teams, students will write grant narratives and applications, following carefully the format of the grant description. These grant applications will be submitted to foundations for full consideration.

Our Families: Then and Now

Students will research their family dynamics and heritage (e.g. size, gender roles, structure, social and cultural attitudes, education, etc.). They will interview family members using student-written questionnares and then compile this data on an individual or class basis. This data will create a foundation for discussion and comparison of families past and present.

Studying Local Microflora

Students will gain a better understanding of the importance of local microflora (bacteria and protists) as it affects everyday life. Students will take specimens from local water supplies, including canals and lakes, local agricultural fields, and local food products. Each specimen will be researched carefully to determine the most likely role each plays in the environment, whether it be beneficial or harmful. Students will then construct a catalog of the different specimens and their respective ecological roles.

A Look at Our Ecology

Students will catalog, identify, and describe the ecological system in an area of approximately one city block. Students will make careful observations of the living organisms and discuss the ecological roles of each living organism in the designated area. Students will also consider the impact of the loss of one or more of the living organisms on the area.

Water Testing

Students will discover the importance of water quality as it deals with public health. Students will take and test water specimens from the local water plant along with local water supplies such as lakes, canals, streams, etc. Testing on specimens will involve both chemical

and biological testing. The amount and extent of testing is left at the instructor's discretion. A catalog of organisms and chemicals along with their possible effects on human and animal health will be constructed. The data will then be correlated with local public health data to determine the possible links to inadequate water quality.

Disease in the Community

Students will examine the susceptibility of the local population to three major diseases: cancer, diabetes, and heart disease. Students will construct surveys and interview questions through which they will gather data on the local population as it relates to age, race, occupation, diet, family history, socioeconomic level, and activity level. The information gathered will paint a better picture of the occurrence and severity of these three deadly diseases on the local population. The data gathered will be correlated and compared to similar regional, state, national, and worldwide data on these three diseases.

Math in the Real World

Community members, such as policemen, firefighters, and engineers, will be invited to the classroom to demonstrate the use of mathematics in their respective jobs. For example, firefighters can discuss hose length and water pressure, engineers and construction workers can discuss geometric principles, and policemen can simulate accident scenes and situations where angles could be measured. Students will observe and participate in these demonstrations. These presentations can be used as a source from which to draw study and test material.

The Llano Grande Center for Research & Development, a Rural Challenge initiative, is housed at Edcouch-Elsa High School in Edcouch, Texas. For information, contact Center Director Francisco Guajardo at 956.262.4474.

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